

HE KARAKIA MIHINARE O AOTEAROA  
A NEW ZEALAND PRAYER BOOK

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Anglicanism has deep roots in the recent history of New Zealand and has firmly held its presence in the island nation for almost two hundred years. In 2020, the population of New Zealand surpassed five million citizens, and according to the 2013 census, 49% of the population identified as Christian. In this same census, 469,036 people (11.8% of the population) claimed Anglicanism as their denominational affiliation. The indigenous Polynesian peoples of the island nation, the Māori, account for 16.5% of the inhabitants. Their origins began when settlers from eastern Polynesia arrived in New Zealand in several waves of *waka* (canoe) voyages in the early fourteenth century. Over the centuries, their language, religion, and art developed into their own unique culture, evolving independently from that of other eastern Polynesian cultures. Just as evidence suggests a heavy influence of European culture in the traditions and rituals of Western Christianity, much of the culture of the South Pacific island nations shines through within the context of the Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand, and Polynesia and their 1989 prayer book, *He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa*.

Dutch navigator Abel Tasman was the first European to discover New Zealand in 1642. It would be another two hundred years before the English would colonize the islands. In the early nineteenth century, they brought Anglican Christian missionaries with them and formally annexed the islands, establishing the first European settlement at Wellington by 1840. That year, the Treaty of Waitangi was signed by the Māori, recognizing British sovereignty in exchange for guaranteed possession of their land. Regardless, armed territorial conflicts ensued for another three decades until there were too few of the Māori left to resist the European encroachment. In 1830, the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* was translated into Māori and has commonly been referred to as *Te Rawiri*, meaning “the David,” reflecting the prominence of the Psalter in the services of Morning and Evening Prayer. Since then, it has undergone innumerable translations,

revisions, and editions. *Te Rawiri* and the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* remained the standard for Anglican worship in New Zealand until 1988 when the Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand, and Polynesia commissioned through its general synod *He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa* with the intention of serving the needs of Anglicans in New Zealand, Fiji, Tonga, Samoa and Cook Island.

The Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia (its unified, official name) encompasses many different people and cultures in the South Pacific. As “Aotearoa” is the Māori word for New Zealand, these two “tikangas” geographically share the same area; therefore “tikanga” does not mean “diocese” in the same sense that we define it here in the United States. As one church, it is a constitutionally autonomous member of the worldwide Anglican Communion. Because of this, *He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa (A New Zealand Prayer Book)* is unlike many modern prayer books in its unusual diversity of languages and cultural influences. To better understand some of the reasoning behind certain decisions made regarding this book, we must first form a better understanding of Māori culture and their concept of *tikanga*. Tikanga is derivative of the Māori word “tika,” which means “right” or “correct.” It is a Māori concept which has a wide range of meanings, including culture, customs, ethics, etiquette, fashion, formalities, lore, manners, meaning, mechanism, method, protocol, and style. The best way to summarize tikanga in English is simply “the Māori way of doing things.” It is also used to define the three sections within The Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia.

The 1992 *Constitution of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia* dictates that the church consists of three tikangas (in this case, defined as “cultural streams”): Aotearoa, New Zealand, and Polynesia. With this constitution, the church states that it is required

to “maintain the right of every person to choose any particular cultural expression of the faith.” As a result of this canon, the Church is headed by a three-person primacy based on the three tikanga system, each of which is provided the responsibility of handling affairs within their own cultural context: Tikanga Māori (those of Māori descent), Tikanga Pakeha (those of European descent), and Tikanga Pasefika (those of other Polynesian descent).

While the majority of its text is in English and Māori, *He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa* contains passages in Tongan (spoken in Tonga) and Fijian (spoken primarily in Fiji). It still reflects the same ecumenical influence of the late nineteenth century Liturgical Movement as evidenced in other new Anglican books of the period, and liberally pulls from a wide variety of international sources. It should be noted that the Māori language, also called *te reo* (meaning “the language”), does not actually have a written form. The missionaries who arrived in 1814 learned to speak Māori and introduced the Latin alphabet; therefore, any written form of Māori is actually just a phonetic transcription of their spoken language.

One of the first noticeable attributes of the book is the choice of the word “He” in the title, *He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa*. “He” translates from Māori into English as the indefinite article, “a.” This was intentional as it was not necessarily meant to serve as an authoritative document in worship for Anglicans in New Zealand, but rather one of a few documents that dictate the liturgy and worship within the church. As the country, and by default the church in New Zealand, have undergone many changes since before to the General Synod of 1964, many Anglican churches within the Province have opted to continue with the use of the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* or *Te Rawiri*, specifically many of the older members who grew up with the original prayer books.

The layout and order of the contents of *He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa* is not very different from that of the modern *Book of Common Prayer*. Each section is titled only in English, with the exception of three, which offer the Māori translation after the English title: *The Calendar (Te Maramataka)*, *Liturgies of the Eucharist (Nga Hakari Tapu)*, and *A Catechism (He Katikihamā)*. Again, note the use of the indefinite article “A” (or “He”) in the Catechism section. Alternatively, there are some subsections with Māori being the most prominent language, offering a parallel version of English text, rather than a direct translation. The sections for which the English and Māori titles are given appear to be sections of greater importance for observance by the people of all three of the tikangas. The sections in Māori that are subsequently paralleled with English seem to be culturally-specific ceremonies to the Māori. One such service can be found in the section titled “Funeral Liturgies and Services in the Time of Death.” There is a subsection called “Te Tikanga Karakia mot e Takahi Whare,” meaning “Prayers in a House after Death.” This is a service in which the Church marks the family’s return home and reflects the continuing care for their well-being as they resume their lives. Through a formal entry into the house, prayers, and a meal, the house is “re-hallowed” for the now smaller family.

The prayer book begins with *The Calendar (Te Maramataka)*. Of course, the standard feasts and seasons are followed in accordance with the standard liturgical year; however, the calendar in this prayer book includes commemorations of people, church leaders, and martyrs associated with the spread and development of Christianity in New Zealand, Aotearoa, and the Pacific. One such commemoration is that of Rota Waitoa on May 22. Waitoa’s ordination to the diaconate in 1853 marked the first ordination of a Māori into the Anglican church. He was subsequently ordained to the priesthood in 1860.

Many Māori-specific prayers, canticles, and songs can be found throughout the prayer book. The poi chant, written by Kingi Ihaka, is offered as a canticle for chanting. The poi is exclusive to the Māori and refers to both a “ball” on a cord and the choreography in its performance. The dance is performed by women while the balls on flax strings are swung rhythmically. The text of this particular poi chant praises the Trinity, the founding fathers of Christianity in New Zealand, and martyrs throughout their history.

The Eucharistic services are offered in their entirety in Māori, Fijian, and in Tongan as parallels to the English text. As is the case with Māori, Fijian and Tongan are represented in phonetic transcription as they also have no written language. The English text does not differ much from the Rite II language of the modern *Book of Common Prayer*. The Catechism, however, offers some insight into the way the Anglican Church in New Zealand views their place in the Anglican Communion and how they understand the relationship between the Māori and the Pakeha (white New Zealanders).

When the General Synod of 1964 established the initial Commission on Prayer Book Revision, their intent was not necessarily to create a new prayer book for New Zealand, but to offer revisions in a contemporary vernacular and in response to the needs of the Province. Over the proceeding twenty-five years, New Zealand would undergo many societal changes that would necessitate more than just revisions to the *Book of Common Prayer*. In 1989, *He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa* was approved and published in order to offer a diverse liturgical resource for such a culturally diverse region of the world.

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